of essential goods, imports of items which are in short supply like pulses and onions have been placed under OGL at zero per cent import duty and the duty on import of edible oils has been reduced to 15 per cent from 25 per cent in order to augment the total availability of these items. Exports of onions has been banned. Some of the essential commodities like rice, wheat palmolein and kerosene are also supplied through the public distribution at below market prices. Stringent actions are being taken against hoarders, blackmarketeers and others indulging in unfair trade practices under the Essential Commodities Act and prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act by the State/UT Governments. As a result of the above measures rising trend in prices of onions and potatoes has been arrested.

Export of Onion and Onion Products

783. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state the details regarding the export of onion and onion products from India in the years 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : The total quantity and value of onion and onion products exported from India during 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 are as under:

Qty: MTs
Value: Rs. crores

Year	Qty	Value
1996-97	440415	303.12
1997-98*	342083	237.97
1998-99* (April 98 June 98)	118576	93.95

(SOURCE: DGCI&S, Calcutta)
*Provisional

Indigenisation of Cars

784. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that D.G. Foreign Trade has asked foreign companies manufacturing cars in India to disclose details of their indigenisation plans;

(b) if so, what are the modalities for conducting such an exercise fool-proof; and

(c) whether the European Union challenged the indigenisation clause before the WTO?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) Yes, Sir. Information has been called for from the car manufacturing companies in this regard.

(b) The information called for would give a fair idea about the indigenisation levels achieved by different companies.

(c) Yes, Sir. The European Union has filed a dispute in the WTO against our auto policy.

Promotion of Agro-Export

785. SHRI JANARADHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal under their consideration to promote agro-export;

(b) if so, the details of the proposal;

(c) the details of the agricultural commodities whose exports will be augmented; and

(d) whether interests of country's consumers will be kept in view so that there is no scarcity of items which are proposed to be exported?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) to (d) The policy of the government to permit exports of agricultural products